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Association was prepared to adopt the Report without further discussion, and without changes in the printed text. It was briefly argued by Professors Calvin Thomas, W. T. Hewitt, and H. C. G. von Jagemann, that the Report in its present form was admirably adapted to suggest experimentation, and that its revision into more definite expression on several subjects should await the experience of the next five or more years. The motion, therefore, offered by Professor Calvin Thomas, to accept the Report as printed (see *Proceedings for 1898*, p. xxiv), and to discharge the Committee was passed by a unanimous vote of the Association.

The Secretary presented the following letter, from the Secretary of the Irish Historical Society of Maryland. Time could not be allowed for the reading of the entire letter; it was therefore decided to defer the consideration of the letter.

#### THE REVIVAL OF THE GAELIC LANGUAGE.

*The President and Members of the Modern Language Association of America,*

*Gentlemen:*—Through the kindness of your courteous Secretary, Professor James W. Bright, I am permitted to call your attention to the efforts being made for the preservation of the Gaelic language (the native language of the Irish Celts) as a spoken language.

Owing to circumstances which I will not enlarge upon, the language has been slowly dying since the 16th century, being gradually superseded by English as the spoken language of the Irish race.

Notwithstanding the fact that the most rigorous laws were enforced against the use of the Irish language, and that it was forbidden to be taught, the Irish race clung to their language with wonderful tenacity (when circumstances are considered), and it was not until this century that the Irish became, as it were, alienated from their language.

Slowly but surely the dominant influence of the English people over Ireland, resulted in the discontinuance of Irish as a spoken tongue; English became the language of everyday life, was taught to Irish children in the so-called National Schools (corresponding to our Public Schools), was the medium of printed matter, and finally the Irish language became a curiosity in many parts of Ireland. The class which held to it most tenaciously was the agricultural population of the west of Ireland which had least come in contact with English-speaking people.

There were always in the dark days of the last three centuries, scholars who loved the old language and studied it reverently; and there was never

a time, even in the most cruel times of persecution, that there was not a certain amount of native literature in the Gaelic, produced and circulated among the people.

About 50 years ago some of the great Irish scholars of the period called attention to the necessity of some vigorous action being taken to preserve the language from extinction; and Thomas Davis (who more truly deserves to be called the national poet of Ireland than Thomas Moore) showed the necessity of the Irish keeping alive their language, if they wished to be regarded as a race separate and distinct from the people who are generally but erroneously called Anglo-Saxons.

However, little was done. It is true there were scholarly Irishmen who clung to the old tongue, and took pleasure in perusing the old manuscripts, but their interest was largely of the antiquarian or pedantic nature, and was content to find an outlet in clearing up some obscure passage, or searching for some rare form of idiomatic expression.

The popular indifference went on until 1877, when the first really important step was taken to place the Irish language in the position it should hold,—as the vernacular of the Irish race.

The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded in Dublin in the year 1877. This society issued three little books for the teaching of the Irish language, viz.: the *First*, *Second*, and *Third Irish Books*, specimens of which I have the pleasure to present to your society. Of these text-books, up to 1897, 128,521 copies had been sold. This was exclusive of the copies which had been sold in America by publishers who issued reprints of the text-books here.

Associated with this society, and interested in the furtherance of its object, were the following named learned gentlemen, who were not Irishmen:

Professor Roehrig, Cornell University; John Rhys, M. A., Professor of Celtic Languages, University of Oxford; de Jubanville D'Arbois, Collège de France, Paris; Mons. Emile Ernault, Paris; Mir Aulad Ali, Professor of Oriental Languages; Professor Hugo Schuchardt, University of Gratz; Dr. Max Nettlau, Vienna; Professor H. Pederson, University of Copenhagen; Dr. Heinrich Zimmer, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, University of Greifswald, Prussia.

Although these elementary books were comparatively simple, they did not give a very definite idea of the pronunciation of Irish words; for it must be confessed that Irish orthography is not nearly phonetic, and offers a wide field for the labors of the gentlemen who are interested in the Phonetic Section of your Association.

The difficulties a person had in learning to speak Irish from these books were:

- (1) Irish orthography was largely unphonetic.
- (2) The sounds of a number of the consonants, and of consonantal combinations, could not be acquired from these books, and had to be acquired from a Gaelic speaker.

(3) Gaelic speakers were rare, and when found were too shy or too ignorant to be of much service; few of them could read or write the Gaelic language,—many of them could not read or write English.

However, this society performed a noble work in interesting many students in the language, and in arresting the decay of the language.

In 1893 the Gaelic League of Ireland was formed. The gentlemen who formed this league believed that hitherto the efforts to interest the Irish people in what should be their native language, had been on too scholarly a basis, and that an effort should be made to meet the requirements of the case; that the acquisition of the language should be made as easy as human ingenuity could devise, and that an effort should be made to remove or explain away every difficulty.

The result was the eventual publication by the League of the *Simple Lessons in Irish*, in 4 parts, by the Rev. Eugene O'Growney.

I have sent specimens of the 4 parts of *Simple Lessons in Irish*, to your Secretary.

Eugene O'Growney was born in 1863. Neither of his parents spoke Irish, and there were no Irish speakers in the district in which he lived. Indeed, young O'Growney did not know there was an Irish language until his 16th year, when he went to college. As soon as the young student learned there was a native tongue he at once set about acquiring it.

In 1882 he entered Maynooth College, a training school for Roman Catholic priests. During his six years as a student, all his spare time was devoted to the study of his beloved language. Among the students at Maynooth there were a number who spoke the Irish language, from whom he acquired the pronunciation. Once fairly started on the way, O'Growney's enthusiasm compelled him to supplement his studies by vacations spent among Irish-speaking people, from whom he picked up idioms and colloquialisms with marvelous facility.

After his ordination as a priest in 1889, he became co-editor of the *Gaelic Journal*. He next applied himself to the adaptation into modern Irish of some of the old Irish masterpieces, which were sold at nominal prices.

In 1891 he was appointed sole editor of the *Gaelic Journal*, and later on, Professor of the newly instituted Chair of Gaelic at Maynooth College. Undaunted by the vast field of work before him, he entered on his new duties with the same ardor which marked his whole career. He published an Irish Grammar, an Irish text-book, and began a handbook of Irish Composition.

In 1893, at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Dublin, he began the series of *Simple Lessons in Irish*, now the favorite text-books for beginners of Irish. They were first published in the *Dublin Weekly Freeman*, and in the *Gaelic Journal*, and later in book form.

Father O'Growney steadily refused all remuneration for his work.

“Disdaining all earth can give,  
He would have taught men from wisdom's pages.”

In 1894 his health broke down as a result of his arduous labors in the Irish Language Revival; he was compelled to come to America, and seek rest and relief in the mild climate of Arizona.

Although his life was overshadowed by the certainty of an early death, during all his illness his interest and enthusiasm in the Language Movement never flagged.

He died in Los Angeles, California, in October of this year, a martyr for the Irish Language.

He was Vice-President of the Gaelic League of Ireland from its organization. He was a member of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, of the Royal Irish Academy, and an associate member of other learned societies.

Although Dr. O'Growney had to study the language as a foreigner, he was regarded as the greatest living authority on the spoken language.

Dr. O'Growney's little books are wonderful examples of the wide use which can be made of phonetics in the teaching of foreign languages. The books clearly convey nearly every sound and combination of sounds in the Irish language. I feel justified in making this assertion because I have verified his teaching through several native Gaelic speakers. Words are introduced and grouped according to their sound-relation, each word so introduced is respelled phonetically, every paragraph is indexed by numbers, making reference easy, and the whole series is a carefully arranged system of graduated lessons.

Two years after the issuance of O'Growney's *Simple Lessons in Irish*, it was estimated that the number of real students of Gaelic had increased ten times what it was before.

Armed with the new text book, the Gaelic League was spurred to fresh efforts. Realizing that the preservation of the national language was necessary, of the highest utility, and practicable, they immediately began a vigorous effort to extend the organization, and to have the movement placed on a truly national basis.

They realized that one of the greatest possessions of Ireland is her literature, but even greater than this inheritance is the language which enshrines it. That language, despite the proscription of the Penal Laws, and the worse proscription of the erroneous system of teaching pursued during the past one hundred years, and despite its being ignored in every department of public life, still lives in Ireland, being spoken by nearly three-quarters of a million of the race, and it lives not as a *patois*, but as a vigorous, expressive, flexible speech, capable of being wrought into the highest literary form.

In the fact that the Irish Language so lives lies one of the best hopes for the future of the Irish race; for the decay of a language is the measure of the decay of a nation, and no country altogether losing its language can hope to preserve its historic individuality. On the other hand, history shows that the revival of the language of a people precedes any permanent

national re-awakening. This is shown clearly in the case of Greece, of Belgium, of Hungary, of Bohemia, and of Finland.

In Ireland, fortunately, unlike those countries, there is no question of the revival of the language, only of its rehabilitation, of its obtaining fair play side by side with English, especially in the Irish-speaking districts, where at present the system of education condemns thousands to practical illiteracy, who, taught in a rational manner, would be bi-linguists, with a fair chance of the material prosperity which bi-lingual races certainly succeed in obtaining.

With these preliminary remarks, I will explain briefly the methods and agencies by which the Gaelic League is carrying on the work of restoring to vigorous health, a language which scholars have long since classed as a dead language.

The Gaelic League, which has its central body in Dublin, recognizes that language is the essential factor that makes and distinguishes a nation; it is willing and anxious to apply the principle to Ireland. Hence the League wishes to spread the use of the Irish language as the ordinary spoken medium in Ireland. It has devoted itself to this task. The success of its labors stand out beyond all cavil, and the growth of the movement has been rapid and far-reaching beyond all expectation.

At the central body there are regularly five weekly classes, in Irish, of graduated difficulty; and there is a class for learning songs in Irish. Weekly public meetings are held conducted entirely in Irish. Interesting papers are read, and debates held. Irish songs, readings, recitations, and speeches are delivered. Occasional lectures in English are given for propagandist purposes, such as "The influence exercised by Ireland in the civilization of Europe," by Dr. Michael F. Cox, and, "The True National Idea," by the Rev. Dr. Hickey, Prof. of Irish in Maynooth College.

The League publishes a weekly, *An Claidheam Soluis* (the Sword of Light), a copy of which I have sent you. This paper which is bi-lingual, is solely devoted to the advancement of the language, by the publication of news and articles in Irish on all topics, and in English upon all subjects affecting the Irish language. The League publishes also, *The Gaelic Journal*, a monthly, which publishes interesting and scholarly articles in Irish. The League publishes books and pamphlets suitable for the general public which it wishes to influence, and sells the books at cost. They also act as a distributing agency for such Irish books as those by the Rev. E. Hogan, S. J.—*Phrase Book*; *Irish Idioms*; *Lowe's Principles of Irish Reading*; *Mion Chaint* (bits of talk), by Rev. Peter O'Leary; *History of Irish Literature*, by Dr. Douglas Hyde, &c. The League endeavors to get the Irish newspapers (which are printed in English), to give space to reports of events touching the promotion of the language; and latterly they have succeeded in persuading some of the Irish weekly papers to devote a part of their space to news and articles in the Irish language.

The League believed that one of the most important things to accomplish was to awaken a feeling of pride for the old tongue; for many of those who did speak Irish, did so, as it were, stealthily, as tho' the language were a thing to be ashamed of.

In 1898 the League employed an organizer to go about the country to stir up strong public opinion in favor of the language. He travelled in the Irish-speaking districts, started new branches, and taught young and old Gaelic talkers to read Irish. The inaugural meetings of many of the new branches were conducted entirely in Irish.

This organizer, Mr. Concannon, is a fluent orator, and a man well educated in English, Irish, and Spanish. He was for a while engaged in business in Mexico and the United States, and he has carried into the language extension some of the energy of American business methods.

In 1897, the League revived the Irish literary festival—the Oireachtas—which had been in abeyance for 850 years. This festival is of the same nature as the Eisteddfod of Wales, which has been of immense value in keeping the Welsh language alive.

The national Oireachtas is held annually in Dublin, and prizes are offered for competitions in Irish reading, recitations, poetry, folk-lore, etc.

The League holds another annual national reunion, a "Feis Ceoil," or Festival of Music, at which all the songs are in the Irish language, and thus endeavor, by music, to familiarize and popularize the language.

Local meetings are held in various Irish-speaking districts, which are conducted upon the plan of the national Oireachtas.

These branches have classes studying the tongue, and the branches do their utmost to influence opinion in its favor.

At present the system of primary education in Ireland is exclusively English. The League, realizing that this is the real root of the matter, is making an energetic effort to introduce bi-lingual education.

(This is somewhat in line with the action of the Germans in some American cities inducing the public school authorities to teach German along with English, from the beginning of the child's school career.)

Meanwhile, as the Government has not adopted the teaching of Irish in the National Schools, the League offers small sums to National School teachers who will teach Irish to their pupils outside of their regular school courses, and some progress is made in this way.

The League, wishing to be considered a truly national movement, wisely decided to be strictly non-partisan and non-sectarian. It includes among its members persons of all creeds and politics. One of its best supporters in the north of Ireland was the late Dr. Kane, who was the leader of the Orange party there. The League keeps politics out of its affairs, but it does not keep aloof from politics altogether. Thus, the new Irish political movement, called the "United Irish League," has, as one of the planks in its platform, a pledge to do its utmost to restore the old language to its rightful place, and the Gaelic League compels this new party to have

speeches in Irish delivered in Irish-speaking places. The League has succeeded in getting a number of the new County Councils to put Irish mottoes on their seals.

Cardinal Logue and many of the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church are earnest supporters of the League, and do all they can to help it. In some country districts branches of the League are formed after Mass on Sundays, and frequently the parish priest is the instructor in the language class.

The use of Irish in the churches has increased considerably, and frequently the Rosary, An Paidir (Our Father), Failte an Aingil (Salutation of the Angel), agus an Beannact (and the Blessing), are said in Irish instead of English; sermons in Irish are also much more frequent.

Gaelic League workers, at various times, take advantage of "patterns" (feast days of patron saints), which are held on week days, to hold open-air public meetings, with speeches and songs in Irish.

In daily life Irish speakers are losing the false shame that for a time prevented them from using their native language publicly, and are now anxious to preserve and extend it.

This change of feeling is noticeable in some small things, unimportant, perhaps, in themselves, but which distinctly indicate the trend of public opinion. In several towns the names of streets have been posted up in Irish, railroads have put up the names of the stations in Irish, carts and vans and shop fronts bear their owners' names in Irish. Irish letters and post-cards are conveyed daily through the mail, Irish mottoes are printed on public notices of sports and other amusements, and songs in Irish are sung at concerts and bazars.

Many of the monuments raised during 1898 to the memory of the patriots of 1798 were inscribed either wholly in Irish or with English merely added as a translation.

The work of the League has been a truly patriotic one, and one which called for much self-denial upon the part of the active supporters.

The money required to conduct the work is furnished by branches, by members, subscriptions, and by donations from sympathizers. Mr. Patrick Mullen, of Ireland, bequeathed \$10,000 for the promotion and preservation of the Irish language.

The Gaelic race throughout the world has been appealed to, to support the work of preserving the language of Ireland. Irish-Americans have subscribed a very good sum for the purpose of paying the expenses of the travelling organizer.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (of America), an organization of very poor men, subscribed \$50,000 to endow the Chair of Gaelic in the Catholic University of America. The Chair was further endowed by \$10,000 bequeathed in the spring of 1899 by Miss Mary Moran of Baltimore, who left the money "to help perpetuate the language of her mother," who had been a Gaelic speaker.



There are numerous branches of the League in the United States; there is a branch in Paris; a flourishing one in Buenos Ayres,—and in other countries wherever Irishmen are found.

The Gaelic League of America (composed of the branches in the United States), has been established to further the cause of the preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland, and by spreading a knowledge of Irish language and history, to give Irishmen in America a just appreciation of their own race traditions, and to stimulate a proper pride of race.

Truth compels me to say that I do not wish to convey the impression that this language movement is carrying everything before it in Ireland. Many who should be the friends of the movement scoff at it and deride it; many cannot recognize the high patriotic character of the movement, and regard the entire matter from a utilitarian standpoint, deriding it because there is no material benefit to be attained by studying the language. One of the notable enemies of the movement is Prof. Mahaffy, of Trinity College, Dublin, who has opposed its introduction into the National school curriculum, and has written an article against the language, entitled: "The Fuss about the Irish Language."

I trust your Association will feel sufficient interest in the matter to appoint a Committee to make some inquiry into the Irish language. A study of the language would probably furnish some interesting information about other languages. As your Association is well aware the Irish were at one time called the schoolmasters of Europe; Ireland was the training place of scholars, the University country of Europe, and Irish monks carried intellectual culture to various countries on the continent. Unquestionably they must have left their impress on the languages of those countries.

The Gaelic societies of Greater New York, or of Boston, will gladly welcome any visitor with a "Ceud mile failte roath!" (100,000 welcomes before you!), supply any information desired, and give a cheery "Beannacht leat!" (a blessing with you!) at parting. Rev. Dr. Richard Henebry, of the Catholic University of America, is the President of the Gaelic League of America.

In asking your active interest in this matter, I wish to say that some of the greatest scholars of Europe, devoted to the scientific study of languages are also in favor of this movement, notably Dr. Zimmer, of the University of Greifswald. Indeed I might say that it was the interest displayed by the great German scholars which stirred the Irish from their apathetic attitude towards the language.

Famous French and German scholars find in our despised tongue price-less intimations as to the early history of languages and races.

The greatest magazine of Gaelic studies is written in French, and there are others carried on in German and Italian.

These foreigners go yearly to Ireland to learn the soft rich pronunciation of the old tongue from Irish peasants, and then they go to Dublin to burrow among the great old manuscripts for which the Irish seem to care so little.

The Irish Gaelic is now regularly taught at Oxford, Edinburgh, and Paris; and among the thoughtful students of the German Fatherland at Leipsic and Goettingen.

One of the best approaches to an Irish dictionary is a translation from the German. The discovery of the most ancient form of the Irish language was by another German.

It is worthy of note that when Rev. Dr. Henebry was fitting himself for the chair of Gaelic of the Catholic University, he repaired to Germany for the higher study of Gaelic, and placed himself under the direction of Dr. Heinrich Zimmer. Dr. Zimmer is the author of *The Irish Element in Medieval Culture*, a book which furnishes conclusive evidence, by an impartial witness, of the high civilization and culture of the early Irish—a civilization and culture which they imparted to the continental races.

I am, gentlemen, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

1847 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, Md.	CHARLES P. MONAGHAN, Secretary, Irish Historical Society of Maryland.
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The Association then passed the following resolution of thanks :

*Resolved*, That the Modern Language Association of America, at the close of its Seventeenth Annual Meeting, held at Columbia University, hereby expresses and records its thanks for hospitable entertainment to President and Mrs. Seth Low, to the Officers and the Faculty of Columbia University, to the Century Club and to the University Club of the City of New York, and to the gentlemen who have served as a "Local Committee."

The Association adjourned at 5 o'clock.

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